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September 10, 2026

Dear Superintendents, Presidents, Educators, and Parents:

This Friday marks the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—the darkest morning in living American memory, and a day that still defines the duty of a free people to remember, to teach, and to remain vigilant.

For most of our students, September 11 is a day memorialized in history and not a day they lived through. That is precisely why we must teach it with moral clarity, so students today understand the shock and horror many Americans felt as time seemed to stand still. I encourage parents and educators to create classrooms and homes where students can ask hard questions and have difficult conversations. Students must understand that 2,977 innocent lives were lost because radical extremists hated what America stands for – freedom. We honor those who died. We also honor the sacrifice of first responders, service members, volunteers, civilians, and Flight 93 passengers, who had the courage to run toward danger. The United States of America did not waver in the face of immense tragedy; we answered hatred with courage, service, and love of country.

Florida does not treat this as a passing observance; it is our duty to ensure the memories of the victims and heroes of the September 11 attacks live on. In 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 1537 into law, designating September 11 as 9/11 Heroes’ Day and requiring middle and high school students enrolled in Civics or United States Government to receive at least 45 minutes of instruction on the history and significance of that day—including the historical context of global terrorism, the timeline of the attacks, the heroism of first responders and civilians, the outpouring of charity that followed, and the balance of security and civil liberty. Senior Chancellor Paul Burns recently provided superintendents additional [guidance](#) on the topics that instruction must cover.

We must also double down on educating against the ideologies that produced the horrendous attacks that took place that day and that still seek to weaken this country. Students should leave these lessons knowing that radical extremism, jihadist terrorism, and anti-Western, anti-American doctrines are not abstract “perspectives.” They are hostile to the dignity of the individual, to religious liberty, to the rule of law, and to the civilization that produced the American Founding. Florida schools should form citizens who can name those evils, reject them, and love what is worth defending: our Constitution, our Western inheritance, and the American experiment in ordered liberty.

The Florida Department of Education maintains a Patriots Day & 9/11 Commemoration [webpage](#) with resources for teaching and learning about the attacks. Please review those materials and select what is age- and developmentally appropriate. Use them not only to recount what happened, but to form character—gratitude for those who ran toward danger, contempt for the ideologies that target the innocent, and pride in being American.

Even in the darkest hour, Americans chose one another and rose out of tragedy stronger and more united. Let us teach the next generation to do the same—and to refuse any creed that would unmake this country.

Thank you for helping our students meet this anniversary with understanding, moral courage, and a deeper respect for those who lost their lives and those who still stand watch.

With remembrance,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Mack". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Henry" and the last name "Mack" clearly legible.

Henry Mack, Ed.D.